



MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS

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*Testimony of Glenn Marx,
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Mr. Chairman, my name is Glenn Marx, and I am with the Montana Association of Land Trusts, a group whose focus is private land conservation and open lands conservation.

The Montana Association of Land Trusts supports SB 452, and sees this bill as enhancing opportunity and options for Montana's future. There is a multitude of broadbased support for this bill, and the reason for that support can be summarized in one brief phrase: They want to keep western Montana forestlands intact.

According to a study by the American Farmland Trust, on an average day in Montana, we lose about 43 acres of rural lands that are converted to developed uses. And in the next 20 years something like 100,000 new homes are projected to be built in Montana.

This trend begs the question...Can we expand our economy, create jobs, build places for people to live, and still protect the core of Montana?

This bill gives us opportunity and options to do exactly that. The bill creates a process for the state to purchase critical parcels of private lands, and to manage those parcels as open lands for long-term traditional forestry, recreation, conservation and agricultural purposes.

This bill gives Montanans the opportunity to curtail the fragmentation of forestlands, and fragmentation of these landscapes in some areas is the greatest threat to western Montana's traditional way of life and to western Montana's overall quality of life. From a land trust viewpoint, that's the primary goal and the priority goal of this bill...to curtail the fragmentation of Montana forestlands. That's job one, and it's a job we must accomplish.

This bill creates the opportunity to conserve large blocks of wildlife habitat, protect large blocks of open lands, maintain large blocks of recreational areas and manage large blocks of state forestlands under the state trust mandate, which means additional timber volume and additional revenue for the school trust fund. This bill helps brighten the future of western Montana by preserving the past – the traditional forest uses – of western Montana.

The bill also creates incentives for communities, landowners, conservation groups, timber companies, recreational groups, counties, watershed groups and others to collaborate on landscape protection and landscape management to strengthen and stabilize local economies now and far into the future.

The Montana Association of Land Trusts urges your support of SB 452.